

able to provide those workers or if the workers are not capable of doing the jobs and competing with other nations, our 11 becomes smaller, our relationship becomes larger, and stagnation and even economic collapse are all in the potential field of vision.

So as I go around my district, we begin then to talk where are the workers coming from. Now, we have a great discussion right now about immigration, and I have got good conservative friends who say we need to stop the borders, we need to plug off the borders. For me, I am simply looking at our economic future and saying we have got to replace these 40 million workers. We are about 5 percent unemployment right now, and 5 percent unemployment leaves employers everywhere telling me, Please, Congressman, we need workers, we need people who can show up, people who can be productive, people who can reason and think.

If we do not bring workers in, that is called immigration, I will tell the Members that we have one other choice, and we will do that if we do not bring workers in. The other choice is to send the jobs to where the workers are. Companies cannot work without employees. So we understand if we begin to export jobs to where the workers are, our 11 becomes 10, becomes nine, becomes eight; and again the economic promise of our future is limited because we have a budget right now that is providing very much inflexibility and decreasing. We have shown very little capability to decrease this number.

In my freshman year, the first month we were here, Republicans suggested a 1 percent decrease in the discretionary spending, which would not have even been nearly 1 percent of this overall figure, and the outcry from the American public was tremendous: please cut someone else's program; do not cut mine. We have shown a very deep incapability, either Democrats or Republicans, of reducing the size of the budget. If we also begin to export our jobs to where our jobs go to where the employees are rather than bringing employees into this country and providing jobs, our economic life is equally very difficult.

It is not just that we are needing the workers. We do desperately need them. But the new thoughts, the new ideas, the new inventions, that this Nation was built on immigrants and this Nation will continue to be built on fresh, innovative ideas that come in to us, it is that understanding that must drive us to the final conclusion: that for our economic vitality, for our economic future, this Nation must be open to immigration.

Again, looking at the German models, the European models, immigration is not a word that is friendly there. We find that their societies are not replacing themselves any better than we are. Our birth rate is about .8 for every couple of two. We are not even getting the 50 percent replacement rate in our

growth, and the European countries are doing somewhat worse, and they are affected with the problem even worse than we are so that their aging generations do not have the hope, unless they change their immigration policies, that they will actually be able to sustain the high cost of retirees, the high cost of the aging on a decreasing economic pie.

As we then look into the future, we see the need for our economy to sustain or to grow. We need the vitality of new ideas and new workers coming into the system. We must explore the ways that we can restrain our spending. We must look at the ways to make departments more effective and efficient. We must realize the mistakes that we are currently making in our policies that move us toward stagnation, and we must differentiate those policies from the ones that would move us toward vitality.

We need to recognize that nations begin to compete with nations. We need to realize the economic model of Ireland in lowering its tax rates to both domestic and external corporations, creating a tremendous boom there. We must understand that if we cut taxes, it helps us to create growth and jobs; and if we raise taxes, it actually decreases our capability to grow the economy and create jobs.

We must look at the economic models of other nations who are beginning to see how they can run government more effectively than any other nation is operating government. Nations will compete just as States have competed, just as companies have competed. This Nation must understand that it will compete. We need to be able to move to that model of competition before we move into stagnation, before we run into the deep budget problems that come if we allow our jobs to continue to be taken away by high tax policies, by anti-growth policies. Finally, we must understand that the climate for businesses is one that is extremely critical.

I met recently in this building with foreign economic chairmen, chairmen of boards, CEOs of nations from outside this country that are operating in this country. They said that the factors that affect them are overregulation, overtaxation; but one of the most important things they said and the most destructive thing they find is the overlitigation, that in this Nation they will find their litigation costs to be tremendously higher. So we as a Nation must look to the economic numbers. We must look to the relationship between the size of government and the size of our economy. But we must also be aware of those factors that would cause people to say, Even in the stable environment of the United States, I am going to operate somewhere else because of the fear of litigation.

And not litigation to hold them responsible for things that they have done wrong. Many times the class action lawsuits are not intended to stop

anything. Class action lawsuits have been in order to create a litigation solution. That is, they did not create a solution in operation, but they simply brought an economic solution, which then generally the trial lawyers have benefited from to the tremendous disadvantage of the people for whom they are suing.

That is one reason this body did two things in the early part of this year that have helped the business climate tremendously: we reformed the class action task load. We have reformed the way that class action lawsuits are allowed to come to the courts. We have given people the capability to present their problems without allowing the abuse of the process. And the second thing that we did that is so pro-business is we began to reform bankruptcy. No longer can people hide assets inside their estates and preserve mansions while not paying their bills. These are two things that generally have great effect on the economic promise of this Nation, two changes that were made by this Republican Congress in this year, both of which have been signed by the President.

We have got more work to do. We must deal with health costs, with both health insurance and with the cost of health care in the Nation. I think that we have committees that are working on that. We must deal with the question of extending the tax cuts if we are going to make the tax cuts permanent or if we are going to allow them to phase out and to realize that we are tampering with the future of the economic vitality of this Nation if we do not recognize the value of lower tax rates.

We need to understand that we also should deal with the regulation. Every day I talk to business owners. They tell me that they are overwhelmed with the paperwork of simply meaningless documents that many times are filled out and sent in and sometimes no one ever looks at them.

These are functions that we must review. We must review the cost of our government. We must review the effectiveness of our government. There are always things that we will do by government and we should do by government, but we must understand that we are going to be competing and that those functions must be done properly and with the best resources available, without waste in the governmental process. And at the end of the day I think all of us have the same ambition: to pass along a Nation that is just as vital as the Nation that we inherited.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address this body tonight. I appreciate the indulgence in allowing me to speak on such important matters.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DENT). Under the Speaker's announced

policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, once again it is an honor to be before the House of Representatives. I would also like to thank the Democratic leader for allowing the 30-something Working Group to reappear on the floor again for another week to talk about issues that are facing 30-somethings throughout this country and are also facing Americans in general.

When we talk about issues such as Social Security, the debt, national security, health care, education, those are issues that we all care about. And for the last couple of weeks, we have been talking about Social Security, talking about strengthening Social Security, talking about making sure that Social Security is there for not only the 30-somethings but the 20-somethings, those that are receiving survivor benefits, retirees that are receiving benefits from Social Security, the 48 million Americans that we speak of, and also those that are receiving disability because of an injury while they were working.

But it is an honor being here once again with the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN).

Last week we recessed for Memorial Day, or Memorial week, and I had an opportunity to go to Puerto Rico to speak, along with the Senate president of the Puerto Rican Senate, to put 20-plus names on the wall of proud Puerto Ricans that died in the line of duty defending our great country.

□ 2115

They are great Americans, and I was glad to be there. It was really a moving event for me. They even added the name of a fallen hero from World War II. In Puerto Rico it is kind of hard. Here in the United States they usually say that a person is from the place that they trained or the base where they were assigned, not necessarily where they came from. So the family went through a lot of trouble in trying to get this information up and finally were able to place him on Memorial Wall there by the state capital for Puerto Rico, the capital of that territory.

It is good to see the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN).

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, it is good to be back.

Memorial Day is one of the special days. Memorial Day, the 4th of July, Veterans' Day, those are some of the great moments to be a Member of Congress, because you get to go to all the different parades and all the different events and meet some of the great heroes from communities in Florida and Ohio, those people who were just from average homes, average families, and just went and did their duty. I think it is good that several times a year we remind ourselves.

One of the things that I think that generation of soldiers from World War

II gave us was a real spirit of what it is like and what it means to be an American. It was great over the past week to have these experiences, because I think in many ways we are losing that, that sense of community, that sense of we are all in this together.

During the war, and I am sure the gentleman has heard stories, as I have, of the kind of sacrifices that each community made, each family made. Some would send soldiers off to fight, some would send soldiers off to be a part of support units, some would serve here at home. But then the women and the mothers had their own roles to play back here at home. Whether it was going to the factory or working in the house or working on the farm or wherever it was, everyone in the country made that sacrifice to have the kind of success we had.

I think if there is one governmental program that is indicative of that spirit, it is the Social Security program. We have been focusing on this for many, many months now, really since the beginning of this Congress, and just trying to hammer away at this issue and trying to get our arms around it.

I think we have come to grips with the fact that this program is not in a crisis state. It is the greatest program that this country runs. It runs at a 1 percent administrative cost. Ninety-nine percent of the money that goes into the system gets back out into the pockets of beneficiaries. Only 1 percent is administrative costs. Even those folks out there that may say government does not run efficiently, and I would agree that there are cases throughout government where programs do not run as efficiently as they should, would say this is efficient.

I think part of what we need to talk about from the Democratic side is about reforming government, about making it run efficiently, about how it should run in an age based on information, with technology and knowledge and communication abilities that we have today. How do we make this government run more efficiently? There is no question that we need to address that problem. Social Security is not one of those programs. Ninety-nine percent of what goes in comes back out and goes to the beneficiary.

One of the kind of myths that we are trying to fight here with our 30-something Working Group is that this program is not in a crisis state. We kind of just want to start the debate from there. We are kind of reacquainting ourselves with this.

Here is a chart for the folks at home to look at. It starts in 2005 and continues to 2070. It basically in the navy blue here, from 2005 to about 2047, 2048, if we do not do anything with Social Security at all, we will still be able to pay 100 percent of the benefits, 100 percent of the benefits. If we do not touch this program, if we do not implement anybody's reform package, we will still be okay until 2047.

Then even after that, to the late 2040s, until 2075 where the light blue is,

we are still able to pay 80 percent of the benefits that beneficiaries should be receiving. If we do not touch it, we are 100 percent until 2047 and then still good until 2075.

For the people at home, you make the judgment. Is that a crisis? Is this program being solvent until 2047, 2048, a crisis? That is the real question.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, this is very interesting. I am so glad. For us, we hear it, we know it here in the Halls of this Congress. That is what we were elected for here, to find out this information, to not only share this information with our colleagues in this Chamber and Democrats and Republicans and the one Independent we have here in this House, to share that information with them, but it is important that we do not allow some of these statements that are being made while the President and others are flying around burning all kind of Federal jet fuel saying otherwise, that it is a crisis.

I think the American people know exactly what is going on. It is our job to make sure that in the minority, since we talk about this, we have to explain what the minority-majority issue means. It is important for everyone to know that Democrats, we are in the minority in this House. We cannot agenda bills to come to the floor. We cannot call hearings or committee meetings. All of these privileges are left to the majority, which is the Republican Party at this particular time.

We also have to remember that for many of the issues we are talking about here there are alternatives to those issues. We will be talking about those tonight.

This Federal debt that you have here on the chart right beside you, every American's share of that debt that is on that chart, we had a solution for it and it worked. We were dealing with surpluses. Now we are dealing with that large number.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. In 1993, a Democratic House, Democratic Senate and Democratic President passed a bill that balanced the budget; and we began to pay down the debt in the country because we were running at the surplus level.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Reclaiming my time, I will say this: When we balanced the budget, we did it without one Republican vote in this House. Our children did not have to pay \$26,349.67. Someone who was just born when we started this Special Order already owes that to the Federal Government. Those are the issues we talk about.

But as relates to Social Security, one may say, what are Democrats standing for? We are standing for strengthening Social Security, bottom line. We stand for what happened when Tip O'Neill was in that Chair and Ronald Reagan was in the White House and how they came together and came up with the bipartisan bill without privatization. That is what we stand for.

We look to go back to the days when we saw the Senate, the other body, voting to adopt a Social Security plan 58 to 14. That is bipartisan, Democrats and Republicans. In 1983, when this House voted to put Social Security where it is now, because, as you mentioned, into 40-plus years, and I would just say 40-plus, even though we know it is higher, 100 percent of the benefits will be provided and then 80 percent after that. But in 1983 this House, and it was a Democratic House at that time, but that did not matter, because we moved in a bipartisan way, some 243 Members of the House versus 102 voted for Social Security. If you want to break it down at the partisan level, it was 80 Republicans that voted for, 48 against; 163 Democrats voted for, 54 against. That is a bipartisan bill that passed this House. The discussion that is going on today is far from that.

To start talking about, well, Democrats, they do not want to do anything, or they just want to keep things in the status quo, well, guess what? My constituents are not calling me complaining about Social Security. I do not think the gentleman's constituents are calling him either. Because it is one of the best Federal programs and initiatives that has ever been launched in this country.

We want to strengthen it. We want to strengthen it without going to privatization. From the beginning they are saying benefits will be cut even if you are not part of the privatization program. If you opt not to be a part of the majority side privatization plan, you still lose benefits. So I do not understand the logic there.

But when I started looking at the information and we started looking at the Congressional Budget Office and what they are saying, the only plus benefit I can see here is \$940 billion to Wall Street.

Guess what? I care about the folks that sent me up here from Florida. I care about their well-being. I care about them receiving 100 percent of their benefits versus 70 percent. They paid into it, and they have the right to have their benefits.

Now I just want to say this again, because I want to make sure there is no confusion in this House: To the Members that are watching us, to make sure that they understand that we want to strengthen Social Security without taking us further into debt, and if we have to deal with the whole issue of borrowing the money, at least have a plan to pay it back. That is how we got to that number; not "we," but the majority side, because we have been voting against the budget that they put forth. We have just been spending on a credit card. Where is my credit card? If I can have it, this is the congressional spending credit card right here.

I do not consider myself a hard partisan, because I have some good friends on the other side of the aisle that care about this, that care about this Fed-

eral debt. They do not believe in using a credit card to give out all kind of cake and ice cream when we do not need it as relates to the Federal dollar. I am using "cake and ice cream" as a metaphor. Because if I was to feed my kids only cake and ice cream, what kind of health will they be in?

If we just spend and borrow and allow foreign countries to hold 44 percent of our debt and say we are a financial superpower, that is a misstatement, because soon it is going to be over 50 percent, if some of the Members of Congress, and I mean some of our Members on the majority side, if they do not go see the wizard and say, "you know something? I came here as a fiscal conservative and I want to leave here as a fiscal conservative."

But I can tell you one thing. The leadership on the other side is damaging that image of those individuals that came here. So, obviously, we are in a Federal debt situation, and growing.

We are going to have to make one of two things happen: Either the American people are going to have to rise up and say, enough is enough, we are saying we are going to deal with Social Security for future generations and then we hand our children a debt that as far as the eye can see and say you handle it? When the President marched down this aisle here, went up to the podium and said, if you are over 55, do not worry about it? So now grandparents and parents over 55 are supposed to say to their kids and grandchildren, good luck?

That is the reason why I believe we do not have a bill coming to this floor on Social Security. Yes, there is some discussion, but I believe as long as the majority side leadership and the President are talking about the privatization, the gamble of Social Security, and if you look at some of the articles that are coming out now on this whole issue, you have to be very skeptical of what the President is talking about.

Even the poll that came out, the Washington Post-ABC News poll, I wanted to talk about that, because we are not talking about issues facing Americans.

Health care. When a company's employees come in and start looking at the benefit package, and the small business owner says you will be better off getting Medicaid versus the plan that we offer because the premiums are too high, that is not health care.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield further, as the gentleman is saying that, this survey that the gentleman was just talking about, the Washington Post-ABC News poll said that 58 percent of those interviewed said that the President is concentrating mainly in his second term on problems and partisan squabbles that these respondents said were unimportant to them. Four in ten, 41 percent, said the President was focused on important problems, a double-digit drop from 3 years ago.

The people are speaking. They are saying that, as the gentleman said, like this chart that we went over a few weeks ago showed, giving our debt over to these foreign countries, reducing the independence of this country, pushing the burden off on our children and grandchildren, the next generation, and asking them to foot the bill, that is the issue.

Health care. We have had a health care crisis in this country for how many years now? How many years? And now we are talking about an issue that does not present itself for another 40 years?

These are the issues that we need to begin to talk about. We need to begin to talk about the escalating costs of health care, year in and year out, 15 percent, 20 percent; the rising, skyrocketing costs of prescription drugs, 10, 15, 20, 30, 40 percent. The most profitable industry in the world, and we are not talking about it?

These are the issues that we need to focus on. And to have this charade going on on the side, this dog-and-pony show about an issue that does not present itself for another 40 years I think is misleading and not the proper execution of I think the top leader in the country. I just really believe that.

□ 2130

It is time for some real leadership in the country, and we just do not seem to be getting it now. The poll is absolutely right. We get into these partisan squabbles. We want to work. We want to solve some of these problems. We know there are different philosophies, and it is okay to have a fight about it, but at the end of the day, do what is best for the country.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, there is nothing wrong with stating your opinion or my opinion or the gentlewoman from Florida's (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) opinion or anyone in the 30-something Working Group's opinion, as long as they have merit and foundation, and that it is meaningful and that it is fair play.

And there is nothing personal about what we are talking about. I mean, one may speak of the President, but the bottom line is that the President is term-limited out. There is not anyone who thinks there is some political motivation here to try to make the President look bad; this is not the intent here. The intent is saying that there are leaders in this House, may they be Democrat or Republican, who are going to have to rise up and say, you know, you are wrong, I am sorry.

We are going to talk a little further about young people and dealing with debt; but before the gentleman takes that chart down, I want to make sure, because we are both on the Committee on Armed Services and we are dealing with the issue of national security, and we are dealing with making sure that our democracy stays strong and we protect the homeland. So I think that chart there is very appropriate that the gentleman has up there.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, we went over this a few weeks ago, and this is a portion of foreign-owned debt. It rose to 41 percent under the Bush administration. In the far left corner here, we have the year 2000 and over here, 2004. The purple is the debt held by foreigners. The aqua, turquoise, either/or, is domestically held debt and the billions of dollars, which comes to about the trillions. And in the blue, as my colleagues can see, the portion of the debt held by domestic banks, domestic concerns, domestic interests, has flat-lined. The purple is the foreign-held debt, and it begins to increase; it is starting to move up into the main and starting to even break through the border here.

We can see that increase right there, and that is what worries us. It is that increase right there that says we are losing a portion of our independence, because when the Chinese, for example, own a higher and higher and higher portion of our debt, then we have to begin to factor that concern in when we are dealing with North Korea, when we are dealing with the situation in Iraq, when we are dealing with the way they are manipulating their currency.

Right now, the Chinese are manipulating their currency, some say up to 40 percent. And why is the U.S. not taking a stronger stand? Why are we not being firm with the Chinese? Well, it is tough to play hardball with the bank when they are funding your debt; and that is really what is happening right now, is that the bank is becoming China and they are funding our debt, so we have less leverage over them as they begin to wipe out the manufacturing.

So here we go, here is our debt, here is the chart that we are becoming way too familiar with, the national debt of \$7.79 trillion, and each person shares \$26,000. This is the issue. This is the crisis in this Chamber, and this is the crisis that the country needs to come to grips with.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure because, once again, I believe in third-party validators, and I believe that it is important that if folks want the current number as we stand right now as it relates to the Federal debt and where these numbers come from, I think it is important. I just want to make sure that the Members understand. The U.S. Treasury Web site will give this information also; you can go to www.house.gov/budget/democrats, just to make sure that you are able to get that information and pull it up for yourselves and share it with your family and friends, and I do mean that in the most serious way. I think it is important that we share that information.

Mr. Speaker, one other thing that the gentleman mentioned before I yield back; there are a number of things that are going on in the economic sense. We talk about Social Security, because it is economics for families. And I think that it really, really hits home when

families are going to have to find a way, how they are going to make up for that 30 percent that they are going to lose under the President's plan and the majority's plan.

A part of this effort of coming to the floor every week, our working group meets and we talk about these issues, are for the following reasons: one, we want to let folks know that we want to strengthen Social Security. I do not think there is a Member on the Democratic side, and I will even add some of my friends on the Republican side, who do not want to strengthen Social Security. Folks get elected protecting Social Security. But for the life of me, I do not understand why we do not have more of our Republican colleagues letting the President know we appreciate you on their side of the aisle, we voted for you, but you are wrong. And, I mean, that takes courage, and it takes leadership. I think it is important so that we can move on to issues of dealing with Social Security so we are not stuck in neutral or in park on Social Security because someone has said that is the only way we will deal with Social Security unless the private sector gets its cut. So I think it is important that we understand that.

There is an article today in *The Washington Post* that is talking about "big pension plans fall further behind," and this is exactly what the President is talking about. I have airline pilots, I fly back and forth from Miami to here, and they are telling me, they used to get \$12,000 in pension a month on their pension plans. Now it is down to \$2,000. That is what we are going to do with Social Security, which is security, the word security, saying that it will be there for you. So I think that is important.

But I just wanted to share that piece, because I think it is important that we add that information in so folks do not feel that this is the Tim Ryan philosophy or the Kendrick Meek philosophy. This is a bipartisan effort here as it relates to getting the information, especially from the Congressional Budget Office.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I think the gentleman is absolutely right. When we check and verify our own statistics here that we are using, again, the poll that we had mentioned talking about really what the main issues facing the people of the country are, a strong majority of self-described political Independents, and this is the ABC News Washington Post poll, 68 percent of self-described Independents say they disagree with the President's priorities. Sixty-eight percent. The hard-core numbers on Social Security and the President's priorities are 30, 35, maybe 40 percent in the grand scheme of things. So we are talking about 60 percent of the country not agreeing with the priorities of the President.

As we talk about what the crises are in the country, one thing that I think ties into what we are talking about, the national debt, the annual deficits,

the \$26,349 that each citizen owes to that debt, the \$500 billion annual deficit that we are running, plus, it kind of feeds into a notion in the whole country about debt. So what the 30-something Group wants to talk about a little bit tonight is the issue of young Americans dealing with debt. Because we are really, by the decisions we are making, putting a \$26,000 bounty on the heads of young people, tax bounty on the heads of young people, the minute they are born; and they owe the government that much. Then we begin to look at, project that \$26,000 out for another 22 years from the day they were born, and then we begin to deal with young Americans in college. And this was a very interesting statistic that we were able to find in an article last week.

According to a survey released by Sallie Mae, the Nation's largest provider of student loans, college seniors expected to graduate this year, probably right around now, with \$28,953 in debt; basically \$29,000; \$26,000 of it is going to be student loans, and another \$2,800 of it is going to be credit card debt. So if you are graduating from college today, you owe the 26 grand already from the debt that we need to pay off, which each citizen owes, and then they owe another \$28,000, \$29,000 basically in student loans and credit card debt.

And that feeds into a real problem that we have in this country. It is a disincentive to go to school, it is a disincentive for college, and really it traps a young man or a young woman coming out of college with a good education, and all this debt. That is not freedom. And we hear freedom, freedom, freedom, freedom in this Chamber time and time and time again.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, there are even some folks who would start a freedom caucus in the Congress.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. We have freedom french fries down in the House diner. We do not have French fries, we have freedom fries. Freedom. Is this freedom? Is owing \$29,000 when you get out of college freedom? Is owing the government \$27,000 freedom? Is that freedom? That is not freedom. So we cannot really just apply freedom to little areas that are convenient. And freedom is economics too, and I believe that we are beginning to get into a situation by letting the credit cards run rampant through this Chamber, letting the spending get out of control in this Chamber, and it takes away the freedom for our young men and women.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I think it is important, and I am glad that the gentleman shared that information as it relates to the debt that young people are in now. But guess what? Who is going to help them pay that debt? Nine times out of 10 they are going to come out and try to get a job and I guarantee you, dealing with that kind of debt, and we want them to be able to move into a home, I mean they are going to be living with their parents writing their name on orange

juice saying that they will get out of the house some day because they owe so much.

Now, I am going to talk about what Democrats are doing to put money into the pockets of Americans who are going to educate themselves, making this country strong. Are you ready?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Ready. Let us do it.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. We spend a lot of time making sure we have answers to problems, and I think it is important that the Members understand, if this was a Democratic House, as it stands now, this would not even be a discussion, this would already be an action, or some of the stuff that is happening to Americans would not be happening.

Now, Democrats in this House, we introduced a bill that would help over 1.3 million Americans as it relates to not losing money in their student loans and Pell grants. We talk about the Bush administration and the majority. Well, I can tell my colleagues that late last year in the 108th Congress, 1.3 million college students will lose Federal scholarships, will be unfairly reduced, their scholarship money will be reduced starting in the 2005-2006 school year due to congressional change that the Bush administration and the majority side made to the formula. And what Democrats are doing, we have put forth a bill to replace those dollars to make sure that young people who are trying to go to college, they will have an opportunity to go and not come out in that kind of debt.

It is going to get worse. Those are numbers under the present situation. The debt ratio on those kids and those young people that are trying to educate themselves, some are men and women that are serving in uniform, some are individuals that are trying to better themselves, these cuts will make over \$300 million in a reduction in their scholarship money. So we have legislation that is on the floor now to replace those dollars.

Now, all we can do as Democrats is try to fight through the tall bushes here in the House, here in Washington, D.C., to try to replace that money for these young people. The gentleman talks about freedom. That is definitely not financial freedom, I say to the gentleman.

I will tell my colleague another thing on top of that: we are not only working with what we have and putting forth legislation, but we are also urging young people now, today, now, and parents and Members of this House that have children that have college debt or loans that they owe, to consolidate those loans now before July 1, because on July 1, the interest rate will go up 2 percentage points.

□ 2145

Mr. MEEK of Florida. So you have the opportunity to do it now and work very hard. If you have a problem in getting good information on how to

consolidate, there is information on line that they can use to be able to consolidate that information. You can go on the www.pirg.org/consolidation. That is pirg.org/consolidation to learn more. Or you can go on the House Democrat's Web site, which is www.house.gov/Georgemiller, who is our ranking member on education and workforce. That is house.gov/georgemiller.gov.

I think that is important, to be able to share that information. Because this is for real. This is what everyday Americans are facing. This is not fiction. This is not what we should do or what we want to do. This is exposing what is going on here in Washington, D.C., \$300 million to kids and young people that are trying to educate themselves.

Better yet, the President comes up here, tells folks over 55, do not worry about the Social Security issue. You will not be affected. We are doing this for future generations. And this is what we are doing to future generations.

So I would say this again to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) who is here, that when the rubber meets the road this is what we are doing. Well, when it does meet the road, and which it has met the road now, we have this kind of scenario for young people, coming out with not only student loan debts, but only a Federal debt to the Federal Government, so you might as well make that a little under \$50,000, when they come out of college in what they owe.

I am so happy that that my colleague from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) is fighting these battles, who used to be chair of the education, higher education committee in the House of Representatives when we were in the Florida House of Representatives a couple of years, well more than a couple of years ago, but dealt with these issues that are facing young people. And I am so glad you are here.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I am so glad to be here; and I appreciate the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI's) willingness to put this group together of the members of the 30-something, 10-year period. We each have a few more years to go.

I want to piggyback on something you were just talking about related to the eligibility bar for financial aid. I can tell you just from personal experience all of the way back to when I was entering college and my parents were applying for financial aid for me; and the calculation, even back then, as to what we were eligible for and what the formula said that my parents could afford to pay and lay out that would come out of their pocket for college costs was unbelievable then.

And now, with the changes in the financial aid formula today, I mean, even, I grew up in a middle-class family, you know, regular, average middle-class family, you know, not wealthy at

all, parents who certainly did not live paycheck to paycheck but had a mortgage and car payments and credit card debt and, you know, pretty significant month-to-month bills. And none of that is taken into consideration when you calculate financial aid.

I mean, those major expenses, other than your income, have nothing to do with the formula. So when they say, and back then the numbers were something like, my parents, based on their income, could be expected to pay \$16,000 a year for my college education. Now, given all of the bills that they were struggling to pay for, there was no way.

Now, fast forward to 2005; and the bar has been raised even higher. And add the credit card debt that has drastically increased, with the bar on the graph at a steep incline. You add that to parents' credit card debt, you have kids now who are starting out with credit card debt even in high school.

I mean, that was unheard of when we were in high school. I mean, kids did not start college with credit card debt. They certainly did not begin having credit card debt as early as they do now, with credit card companies literally preying on brand-spanking-new college students with offers and, you know, kids who are willing to sign up to get a credit card just to get a cool t-shirt.

These are students that are not financially sophisticated enough to make the kinds of decisions that they are going to have to make so that they will understand the ramifications for themselves financially for themselves down the road. And we have got to have policies that are going to be able to help them get along in the years to come.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Another part of the Democratic platform, one that we will be issuing in the next few months, is financial literacy. Combat this at a young age, combat this. These kids are in grade school and high school and teach them about the stock market and compounding interest and all of the different aspects to managing money and being debt free, if you save now, and what it turns into 30 years from now. That is another part of the Democratic proposal. We need to teach these kids how not to get in this position here. We need to teach many leaders in the Congress here how not to get ourselves in this position here as well.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Or allow Americans to get themselves in that position. I know that this is a country based on freedom but not based on ignorance. It is important that we share this information. If we know better, we will do better.

And the bottom line is, if the leadership was in place here in this House, the \$300 million that I spoke of that took place in the 108th Congress in the closing days of the Congress has reduced the amount of money that students are able to get as it relates to their Pell Grants, it never would have

happened if we were in control, if this was a Democratic House.

So the challenge has to be there for the majority side to do better; and the bottom line is, better is not happening when it comes down to those kinds of statistics that you have there, Mr. RYAN, that the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) just spoke about. I think it is important that we remember.

So we talk about solutions. Solutions is making sure that we make good decisions and we have good leaders in place that will allow legislation to either be stopped that is bad, coming from the other body, or recommendations from the White House, just say no, this will not happen. We are looking for future generations, and we are here to protect future generations.

But the bottom line is, if we continue to do this kind of rubber-stamping that is going on here on Capitol Hill, we are going to continue to go on a downward spiral. The deficit will continue to get higher. In the 108th Congress, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, I said, well, this is the highest debt in the history of the Republic. How could it get worse? It is worse now, and it will continue to get worse until something different happens here in this Chamber and in this Capitol and in this city. So it is important that we look at these issues.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. One of the comments that a previous speaker made here not too long ago was that we do not have many options. You can raise taxes or you cut spending or you grow the economy. Well, you cannot grow the economy if you are putting this tremendous burden on students, the next generation of people who are going to go out and create things and not making the proper investment into education as we have talked about before. A lot of our urban areas and a lot of our rural areas, where many of those kids go to school in poverty, do not have health care, are not getting the kind of education that they get in some of the suburban areas.

Those are the kids that we need to fund, educate, and let them go out and create and grow the economy. But you cannot do that by tying a ball and chain around their neck and throwing them over the river, because they sink, and at the same time not make the kind of investments.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. You talk about financial literacy. You are absolutely right. What is happening now, number one, we are not setting the example at the top of the mountain. I mean, what we are doing here is adding to our deficit month after month, year after year.

What kind of message are we sending to generations that are going to come behind us about the importance of minimizing your debt? I mean, we are deficit spending. So why would most Americans think that that is not a normal way, a responsible way to live?

Most Americans, let me not overstate it, many, many Americans live

paycheck to paycheck, and they live right to their means. This is a society where, no, I cannot have that now because I cannot afford it right now, is not instilled in people from the time that they are young. That is why financial literacy is so important.

We have a Financial Literacy Caucus. I am on the Financial Services Committee, and we have begun an effort, especially on the Democratic side, to try to educate generations coming up through life that at some point you have to decide what you can afford to have, and there has to be a now and a someday and not everything can be in the now.

That is also a lesson that Congress and the President could learn, too: Not everything can be in the now. Sometimes we have to make some financial decisions that will say, well, it would be nice if we could afford that humongous tax break for the wealthiest few, but in order to be fiscally responsible we cannot have that now.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And patriotic. Quite frankly, tell the wealthiest people in the country, we would love to give you a tax cut. Who would not? Who in politics would not like to tell a really rich person I want to give you a tax cut? I mean, that would be great.

But you have to do the right thing, and you have to say, you have to meet your responsibility to society. We cannot afford to give you a tax cut right now, because we have a \$7.79 trillion debt. Now you can be selfish and still want one. Why not give the middle-class guy the tax cut, who has all of this debt burden, who is trying to send their kids to school? We cannot afford to give Warren Buffet a tax cut. I am sorry, Warren.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I represent a district with a pretty sizable percentage of wealthy individuals. And when I am home, I cannot tell you the numbers of people who come up to me and say, you know, I would love to have a tax break, but I care about my children's education a lot more. I care about the Nation's financial and fiscal health a lot more. Keep your tax break. I barely felt it, and it really is not going to make that much difference in my life.

Many, many people who are wealthy and qualify for those tax breaks understand where their priorities are and should be. It seems that only the administration and the leadership of this Congress does not have their priorities straight.

I mean, even Mr. OBEY, when we were considering the Defense Appropriations Bill in the last couple of weeks, when he offered an amendment to reduce the tax break for the wealthiest few Americans, I think it was half a percent. I think it was an incredibly small amount of money, just a little bit less of a tax break, that the wealthiest few would have received in order to expand the inspections, the percentage of inspections that we perform at our ports, for the cargo in ports, and that, even that amendment was rejected.

We chose tax breaks for the wealthy over our homeland security. Now if that is not priorities being out of whack, then I do not know what is.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I remember last year as well, we did the same thing for veterans benefits. It was an increase of, I do not remember how many billions of dollars, but it basically made it full funding. But it had to reduce in kind dollar for dollar what would be needed for the veterans from the tax cut that went to the top 1 percent. Voted right down, party line.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. You know, what is very disturbing is when we commemorate or recognize or reflect on those that have fallen for our democracy, our veterans or our past veterans or those that did not even get an opportunity to be a veteran because they were an enlisted person and they died. Right down the street from here is Arlington Cemetery. When their colleagues or comrades that served with them, you know, side by side, and they come to Washington, D.C., to remember those that have fallen and to know when we honor them on one day, even on Veterans Day, we honor them on two days, their sacrifice to our country, and better yet on that next day, that Tuesday, they are waiting 6 months to see the ophthalmologist or they have to pay more on a copayment.

We did not keep up with our end of the promise. You know something, it is even harder to keep up with it because of this Federal debt. But we would much rather make those that have been extremely, extremely successful in this country to save a few more dollars.

There is actually another article that I am going to bring up a little later, but I just want to share this with you all. My uncle served in Korea, and he took a bus up here with some other veterans when we dedicated the World War II Memorial out in the Mall here.

□ 2200

It was a well-attended event, very historic. My mother came, a past Member of this Congress. We sat out there. And they had all the World War II veterans and veterans in general stand up. Some of them could stand. Some of them could only put their hand up in the air.

When you look at what is happening here with the Federal debt, taking this Federal credit card that I keep pulling up and charging it to the American people and to their future for many of the wrong reasons, it cannot help but make you very upset with the individuals that are making the decisions. And that is where the rubber meets the road.

When you start looking at those who have served, who allow us to celebrate the very freedom that we live under right now, and they are having to run around here worrying about if they can make a co-payment or not. You go to the VA hospital, they do not treat.

There are not a lot of veterans, unfortunately, that are Members of Congress, or maybe it would be a lot different in this town. They are waiting and waiting. And some of them call my office. Congressman, this is all I need. Can you help me?

It should not be an act of Congress to get what they need to get out of the VA or veteran benefits in general. And we are about to have a whole other crop of veterans after this war or after some of them leave the military that are going to need those services. And I guarantee you right now there is not an American that I run into that says, Congressman, we are giving the veterans too much. If anything, can you do something. There is a veteran next to me, he is not even part of a meal program because he or she cannot afford to get it.

So I would just leave it at that because I am getting upset talking about it.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Look at the numbers here. The reason the gentleman is upset here in trillions of dollars over 10 years, we have a graph. We have to have a graph for everything. Permanent tax cuts, 1.18 trillion over 10 years. Tax cuts for top 1 percent 800 million; VA budget, .3, 300 million. When we need to fully fund this everyone says we do not have the money, but we have the money for this, and we have the money for that. So this is the question.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I do not want to be greedy on the time, but I just have to say this to my colleagues, what happened? Was it the gentleman from New Jersey (Chairman SMITH) that stood up and said, we are going to do the right thing. A Republican chairman. We are going to do the right thing by our veterans, and I am going to pass a budget that is going to help the veterans.

You know what happened to him. They moved him off the committee. He lost his chairmanship. This is not the Wasserman Schultz/Ryan/Meek story. This happened and veterans throughout this country know it happened.

So when we start talking approximate issues such as Social Security; we start talking about Medicare when we were told \$350 billion and now it is up to \$724 billion; when we start talking about issues such as Leave No Child Behind authorization bill far beyond what the appropriations actually is, folks have to pay attention to this. And I will guarantee you this, if we had the opportunity to run this House, this would be a nonissue. As a matter of fact, we would be working in a bipartisan way to correct some of these issues. We are not saying Democrats will do it. No. Democrats and Republicans and the one Independent in this House will do it. So this is so very, very important.

You know something, I do not care. I hope that there is a Member in a leadership position right now that is listening that is saying we have got to

change this because the pressure is being applied by the Democratic side of this aisle. And if they do not take the leadership responsibility to do what they have to do on behalf of these Americans, then guess what, they may be making a career decision. That is what democracy is all about. So I feel in no way sorry by pointing out the blatant inequities in leadership and being able to provide for those veterans and being able to provide for future veterans when we start talking about Social Security and what we should be doing here in Washington.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, we cannot emphasize enough, this is just another example of how the priorities here are out of whack. We had an opportunity a few weeks ago to visit our troops who were injured in fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan at Walter Reed Army Medical Hospital. These were young men, about a dozen of them, that I had an opportunity to visit, the most heart-wrenching stories, many of whom lost their limbs, mostly lost their legs, had their limbs obliterated, defended our country. Every single one of them said to me that all they wanted to do was to go back and they were so sorry to leave their buddies behind.

These are people that when they become veterans we slap them with a disabled veterans tax. We say to them that for every dollar that they earn in disability payments, we are going to deduct a dollar from their pension. That is the reward we are giving them for serving our country and for becoming injured in the line of duty.

Then we are saying to our members from the National Guard that unless you are within, I think it is, 90 or 180 days of being activated for duty, we are not going to pay for your health care. We do not provide health care to our members of National Guard who we know now are going to be activated at some point, who we know are giving up the salaries that they earn in their regular jobs, who are sometimes covered, sometimes not covered by health insurance at their regular jobs. But one of the things that members of the National Guard have to have to worry about is how to even pay for health care for themselves and their families. Yet we are still providing tax break after tax break for the wealthiest few Americans.

I mean, it just is shocking that the top of the priority list is tax breaks and this trickle-down concept that does not ever seem to go away when it comes to the Republican leadership in this Congress, that if we give the tax breaks to the wealthiest few that somehow their investing and spending is going to flow down and help all the little people.

We are at the point in our lives where we are real live grown-ups now. Has it worked in our lifetime? It still is not working, and we are still not providing for the people who really need the help, who are defending our country. In-

stead, we are taking money back from them.

We talk about the death tax. We should be talking about the disabled veteran tax, because that is what we are doing to our veterans' pensions when they have been injured in the line of duty, and it is absolutely unconscionable.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. The gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR) offered a motion here to recommit a couple of weeks ago.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. What happened?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. A party-line vote went down. And that was on the health care side of it. That was on making sure our Guards and Reservists have coverage regardless. And the gentleman brought out the numbers and it was maybe a billion dollars, but these men and women are picking up and they are in all our districts, and they pick up and they leave their families and come back and leave and come back.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. They spent 1.8 on tax cuts.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Exactly. And we have the money if we wanted it, if we wanted to ask the top 1 percent to make a sacrifice to help fund this. That money will work its way back into the economy anyway. The fact that that is bad for the economy is an argument that I have never bought into. It is the voodoo economics, the trickle-down economics theory. I would rather have it in the hands of people who are making 50, 60, 70, \$80,000 a year that go out and invest in their kids and those kinds of things. But to say we do not have the money, I think, is shameful.

These are good people. These are not bad people. But to choose them when you have to make decisions based on the whole society right now over this group, I think, is shameful.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Let us get into some closing comments because we have about 5 minutes left.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I have a couple of e-mails that I would like to share from last week. We asked everyone 2 weeks ago to e-mail us in what they thought their priorities were in the country. If it was Social Security, they could say it was Social Security. If not, tell us what you think the real crises are in the country.

We have Jim Munroe and Nancy Grover from Albuquerque, New Mexico: "The number one priority has to be turning the deficit around while making the tax system fair and equitable."

Mari Howells from Erie, Pennsylvania, a 30-something Dem who saw us a couple of weeks ago: "Health Insurance! Our health care system is awful. It is bringing the whole country down. Number 2: the war. What a mess. Number 3: poorly funded schools."

I am going to take a minute here to read a beautiful e-mail that we received a couple of weeks ago from a man who saw us three on C-SPAN. He was laid off on September 11, 2002, from

a Fortune 500 company in Dallas, Texas. Informed that his position had been dissolved, "and since I was one of the highest paid, 38,000 a year, on their help desk, that I had to be one of the first ones to go. I was given 2 weeks severance pay and found out through my network that the company had outsourced the help desk to an overseas vendor. I am a proud veteran of the U.S. Air Force where I served 8 years and received an honorable discharge. Before being unemployed I had great health insurance and I am in fact a cancer survivor, but after losing my job and not being able to afford the \$340 monthly payment to COBRA to keep my health insurance, I had no other choice but to go to the Dallas VA hospital to register for my health care.

"I am 41 years young and I have now been unemployed for almost 3 years. My father was forced into early retirement because of his heart and my mother just recently lost her job of many years at a local bank. They could barely make it on their mediocre salary and his Social Security. I do not know what they are going to do now and now I have nothing to help them with because I do not have a savings, checking account or 401(K).

"When I was working, I used to send my mother \$250 a month to help her and my father out a little bit, but I cannot do that any more. He has a temporary job at the bank that pays \$13 an hour with no benefits, a lot less than I used to make but I am very happy just to be working again. God bless you."

So these are the real people that I think we need to begin helping.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. There is not a lot more that can be said other than that I think that we need to continue to come to this floor every week and I can commit to you that I will join you and make sure that we can continue to highlight the direction that they are taking this country and the increased debt and the selection of the people who need the least over the people who need the most. And I am not talking about people who are struggling to make ends meet.

You have average working families in America whose priorities include health care and quality education and just making sure that they can stay out of debt. And, instead, the wealthiest few are the priority of the leadership in this Congress.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. The e-mail is 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov. That is 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov. Send us an e-mail. Tell us what you believe to be the main crises facing this country.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Www.pirg.org/consolidation. Student loans, get them consolidated before the interest rate goes up almost 2 percent by the first of next month. And 70 percent of our troops are under the age of 30, which is a younger generation right now fighting in Iraq.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MACK). The Chair would like to remind Members that their remarks in debate should be addressed to the Chair and not to the television audience.

STEM CELL RESEARCH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago on this floor there was a very prolonged and serious debate on stem cells. Now that we have had time for emotions to subside, I thought it might be productive to spend a little while this evening talking about the subject of stem cells and why there is so much interest in it across the country.

A few months ago there was so much interest in this subject in California, for instance, that the voters voted favorably for a resolution that would make \$3 billion from California taxpayers available to do research on embryonic stem cells.

What are stem cells? We have a chart here which kind of shows this.

□ 2215

There are fundamentally two types of stem cells. There are adult stem cells and there are embryonic stem cells.

I guess the ultimate stem cell is the fertilized ovum, which is referred to here as a zygote, because from that cell develops all the cells of the body. That single cell, produced from the union of the egg and the sperm, divides and divides again and again until finally it is a blastocyst; and then it goes to the gastrula stage, and at that stage the three germ layers begin to sort out the cells that are already differentiating, is the technical term that is used for that.

Every cell in our body, of course, has all of the same gene complement. And by mechanisms that are not clearly understood, during the embryonic process genes get turned on and get turned off, and the cells that are destined to produce your skin, for instance, the genes that are producing all the other tissues of the body are turned off, and only those genes necessary for producing the skin are still active.

Here we have the three germ layers: The ectoderm, which is the outer layer, and from that will develop your skin and your nervous system.

Then we have the mesoderm, that will be the middle layer, meso meaning middle, and from that will develop most of the weight of your body, all of your skeletal muscle, your cardiac muscle, much of the kidney, the blood cells, the smooth muscle in your intestines and stomach and so forth.

Then from the innermost layer of this inner cell mass as it is called here, the mass of cells that differentiates

into these three germ layers, the endoderm, the internal layer, produces not very much of the mass of your body, the pancreatic cell and the thyroid gland and the line of the things like your lung and intestines and so forth are produced from the endoderm.

Then, of course, there are the unique germ cells produced, the sperm in the male and the egg or the ova in the female.

The reason for the intense interest in these stem cells is because of the perceived potential for affecting the course of many diseases and hopefully curing many of our diseases.

We have fundamentally two kinds of problems with our health. One is from tissue deficiencies when the tissue no longer does the kind of thing that it was destined to do and this embryonic development is wearing out or diseased. Then we have diseases from pathogens. These are organisms that can be outside that invade us.

Primarily, the hope is that stem cells will be useful in treating diseases of tissue deficiency. Although if the pathogens have destroyed a tissue and then the body has marshaled its resources with the help of the doctors with the antibiotics and so forth so that the pathogen is destroyed, then there is some hope that through the use of stem cells that you might be able to repair or replace the tissue damaged by the pathogen.

There are a lot of examples of diseases that might be amenable to cure or at least assistance through these stem cells. One is diabetes, which is a deficiency of insulin. Insulin is produced by some little cells that look like islands under the microscope because they are very dissimilar to the cells that they find themselves in. These cells are distributed through the tissue of the pancreas.

The pancreas is a big gland that produces a lot of enzymes. When the food leaves the stomach and goes into the small intestine, the pancreas produces enzymes for the digestion of fats, carbohydrates and proteins. So it is a very important digestive gland.

There is no real reason why these little islands of tissues, called the islets of Langerhans, named for the person who first described them, need to be in the pancreas, but that is where they are. They could, in fact, be any part of your body and do the same thing, which is secreting insulin.

We use insulin to treat persons with diabetes, but everyone knows, particularly the family of those and the patients who have diabetes, that insulin does not cure the disease. It simply prolongs life, but, ultimately, even with insulin, many of the people who have diabetes will end up having peripheral vascular problems with maybe amputation of toes or limbs, usually the lower limb, have problems in the eyes with the peripheral vascular there in the eyes and have vision problems.

Diabetes is the most expensive disease that we have. It costs more to